Transportation Topics

FOR CONSUMERS

from the Office of Consumer Affairs

APRIL 1976 / DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION / WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590 / ISSUE NO. 11

DOT STUDIES COMMENTS RECEIVED ON PROPOSED CONSUMER PLAN

Comments received on DOT's proposed Consumer Representation Plan are now being evaluated by the Department's Officer of Consumer Affairs and the consumer affairs officers of the operating administrations. Eighty-nine responses were received from individual consumers, consumer organizations, business firms, professional and trade associations, and local government agencies. The comment period extended from November 26, 1975—when the plan was first published in the *Federal Register*—until March 1, 1976.

The responses were submitted through the mail as well as at White House Regional Conferences and DOT workshops held in Kansas City (MO), Philadelphia, and Los Angeles during January. In addition, three witnesses requested time to testify at a public hearing held in Washington, DC, in February.

An analysis of the 89 comments indicated the following breakdown: 54 asked questions or made suggestions about transportation programs; 13 expressed need for improved methods of communicating with the public (several commented that the *Federal Register* is not read by the average consumer); 6 supported establishment of a separate

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NEW LAW AIDS FREIGHT LINES, UPGRADES PASSENGER SERVICE

Significant steps toward rehabilitating the Nation's rail system are now being taken as the result of new legislation providing $6.4 billion in Federal aid to railroads. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) points out that while the new law focuses mainly on resolving difficulties faced by freight lines, it also provides assistance for passenger service in the Northeast Corridor between Washington, DC, and Boston.

Signed by President Ford on February 5, the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 incorporates many provisions of a number of bills which DOT had proposed to help solve

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UMTA PRESENTS "HOW TO" SEMINARS ON SMALL-COMMUNITY TRANSIT

DOT's Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA) is sponsoring a series of one-day seminars on "Public Transit for Small Communities."

The open meetings for public officials and interested citizens are taking place in six communities with populations ranging from 10,000 and 50,000. Purpose of the seminars is for UMTA to share with small cities information on the pros and cons of various types of appropriate transit service.

Space is still available at the seminars slated for the following cities: Eugene, OR (April 20); Merced, CA (April 22); Westport, CT (May 4); Boulder, CO (May 11). There is no charge for registration. If you are interested in attending a nearby seminar, write to UMTA, Office of Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20590, or call (202) 426-4043.

Two seminars have already been held in Chapel Hill, NC and Evansville, IN. The programs included films and discussions by involved officials describing how a number of small communities

(Continued on page 3)

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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Photo by Fred Houk

Ronald J. Fisher, Director of UMTA's Service and Methods Division in the Office of Transportation Management and Demonstration, speaks at Public Transit Seminar held last month in Chapel Hill, NC. Fisher acted as moderator for the one-day program.

NHTSA CALLS FOR COMMENTS ON HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM STANDARDS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANRPM) announcing that it plans to revise 14 standards that deal with highway safety programs run by the States.

The 14 standards being reviewed are among 18 that have been developed by NHTSA since 1966 when the Highway Safety Act was passed. The legislation requires NHTSA to establish highway safety program standards; the States are urged to adopt and enforce the standards. Programs covered by the 14 standards deal with such topics as driver education, motorcycle safety, pedestrian safety, periodic motor vehicle inspection, and pupil transportation safety.

NHTSA is asking consumers, highway safety agencies and organizations, universities, and public interest groups to submit comments on the effectiveness and scope of the present standards. A primary reason for the review is that recent research and actual traffic experiences have resulted in new techniques and knowledge that should be reflected in the standards.

Comments responding to this ANPRM should be sent to Docket Section, Room 5108, NHTSA, Washington, DC 20590. The official closing date is April 21, but *Transportation Topics* readers are advised that comments received after the closing date will be added to the docket.

After comments have been analyzed, NHTSA will hold public meetings to discuss possible changes before final drafts of the new proposed standards are submitted to Congress. Consumers who wish to be notified about these meetings may send their names and addresses to Gilbert Watson, Chief, Office of Consumer Services, NHTSA, Washington, DC 20590; refer to this article in *Transportation Topics*.

ENERGY SAVING TIP *Having your car tuned up on a regular basis can save you about 10 percent in gasoline costs.*

ENERGY SAVING TIP *When you are about to come to a stop in your car, coast as far as you can before braking. Simply remove your foot from the gas pedal and let built-up momentum carry you forward. Coasting saves gas.*

ENERGY SAVING TIP *Are you turning your heat back to 60 degrees at night? For every degree you dial down, you can save at least 1 percent on your heating bill.*

NHTSA SEEKS DATA ON MOPEDS

DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued a call for public comment on the safety of motorized bicycles, commonly known as mopeds. Comments received will be used to develop guidelines to help States and local governments regulate the use of these low-powered vehicles.

NHTSA is seeking information about consumers' experiences with mopeds, including data on accidents, need for helmets, range of highway speeds. NHTSA also wants pro and con opinions concerning the need for licensing mopeds.

NHTSA points out that there are wide inconsistencies among State regulations concerning mopeds, which can attain a top speed of 30 mph with an engine of five horsepower or less. Some States require licensing of the operator after an examination, and the use of helmets and eye protectors. Others require that the vehicles undergo periodic inspection and be equipped with certain safety devices, such as a rearview mirror.

Mopeds are not required to meet Federal safety standards that apply to regular motorcycles. However, the moped's capability of operating for sustained periods at speeds up to 30 mph produces an accident pattern more similar to motorcycles than to bicycles. In addition, the mopeds' limited ability to exceed their maximum speed raises the question of whether they should be banned from high speed highways, the agency said.

Persons interested in commenting may write to the Docket Section, NHTSA, Room 5108, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Washington, DC 20509. Refer to Docket Number 75–29. There is no official deadline for comments, but *Transportation Topics* readers are advised to submit letters by May 15.

MORE DOT CONSUMER CONTACTS

In response to DOT's Proposed Consumer Representation Plan, the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) has announced its consumer affairs contact: Lloyd Schwalb, Director, Office of Public Affairs, UMTA, Washington, DC 20590; phone 202-426-4043. Mr. Schwalb joins the other DOT consumer officers announced in the February 1976 issue of *Transportation Topics*.

In addition, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has announced a change in its consumer affairs focal point. The new consumer contact is Eric Hanson, Consumer Affairs Officer, Office of Public Affairs, FRA, Washington, DC 20590; phone—202-426-0881.

UMTA Presents Seminars for Small Communities
(Continued from page 1)

developed successful transit systems. Guidance was also offered concerning Federal and State funds available for small-community transit development.

Similar programs will be presented at the remaining four seminars during April and May. Each session will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the date indicated. Several of the seminars may also meet on the following day for tours of local transit facilities.

Photos by Fred Houk

Comparing notes during a break at the Chapel Hill, NC, seminar (left to right): *Joseph Misner, Office of Transportation Assistance (UMTA); Donald Kendall, Transportation Systems Center (DOT); John Bartosiewicz, Chapel Hill Community Transit; Jim Young, Office of Transportation Management and Demonstration (UMTA); Ronald Fisher, Office of Transportation Management and Demonstration (UMTA); Robert Trotter, Office of Public Affairs (UMTA); Robert Casey, Transportation Systems Center (DOT).*

Seminar members at Chapel Hill session included persons from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

Chapel Hill attendees take packets containing case studies of transit systems in Amherst, MA; Ann Arbor, MI; Bremerton, WA; Chapel Hill, NC; East Chicago, IN; El Cajon, CA; Eugene, OR; Evansville, IN; Merced, CA; Merrill, WI; Sudbury, MA; Westport, CT; and Zenia, OH.

FHWA ANNOUNCES FUNDS FOR BIKEWAY DEMONSTRATIONS

Funding has been announced by DOT's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for a new $6 million Bikeway Demonstration Program.

The money may be used only for construction of bicycle facilities. Proposals for building such bikeways may be submitted by State or local government units. Proposals should be submitted to State highway departments by June 1, 1976.

To be considered, proposals should deal with bikeway projects of national interest which serve to promote bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation for commuter and/or recreational use. For full details on the program's scope and on how to apply, write to Design Division, HNG–25, FHWA, Washington, DC 20590; ask for Bikeway Demonstration Program regulations.

For projects which are accepted, funds will be provided on a matching basis, with 80 percent coming from Federal funds and 20 percent from State or local funds. The new program supplements funds already available for bike projects under the regular Federal-Aid Highway Program.

ARE THESE SYMBOL SIGNS CLEAR TO YOU?

The 34 symbol signs on these two pages have been designed to speak a universal language to travelers using airport, bus, and train terminals throughout the U.S.

Developed by DOT's Office of Facilitation, the program's goal is to establish a uniform system of signs that will be readily understood by all travelers. A special concern is to communicate with foreign visitors who might not understand English-language signs.

The effectiveness of these symbol signs will be tested at Kennedy Airport in New York; at airports in Boston, Newark, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.; at various transportation terminals throughout Florida; and at selected American Revolution Bicentennial sites.

To bring the testing program directly to additional consumers, the symbol signs are presented here in quiz form. Can you readily identify each symbol sign? In the space beneath each symbol, write a word or phrase to "translate" the symbol. Correct answers appear in the box at the bottom of the page.

If you wish to comment on the effectiveness of the symbol signs, write to Symbol Signs, Office of Facilitation, DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

The •testing is designed to demonstrate whether each symbol can be recognized easily by diversified audiences. If any symbol proves unsuccessful, it will be modified and retested.

When the symbols have been perfected, they will be submitted to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) for consideration as an American standard.

DOT's symbol sign program has been endorsed by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, the U. S. Travel Service, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The Office of Facilitation plans to develop and test other symbols which may be needed at transportation terminals, parks, sports areas, and historic sites.

Concessions

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Processing Activities

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Public Services

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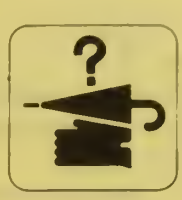

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Answers

(1) Car Rental (2) Restaurant (3) Coffee Shop (4) Bar (5) Shops (6) Ticket Purchases (7) Baggage Check-in (8) Baggage Claim (9) Customs (10) Immigration (11) No Smoking (12) Smoking (13) No Parking (14) Parking (15) No Entry (16) Telephone (17) Mail (18) Currency Exchange (19) First Aid (20) Lost and Found (21) Baggage Lockers (22) Elevator (23) Toilets, Men (24) Toilets, Women (25) Toilets (26) Information (27) Hotel Information (28) Taxi (29) Bus (30) Ground Transportation (31) Rail Transportation (32) Air Transportation (33) Heliport (34) Water Transportation

NHTSA NEEDS YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO HELP PROTECT CARS AGAINST THEFT

In an effort to help reduce the annual theft of nearly one million cars in the U.S., the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is asking for suggestions on effective ways to improve the security of automobiles.

In an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM), NHTSA has announced that it plans to revise its present motor vehicle safety standard dealing with theft protection for passenger cars and other motor vehicles. To strengthen the standard, NHTSA is looking for such specific devices as: stronger door and ignition locks; improved hood and trunk lock mechanisms that could be operated only from inside the vehicle; a system that would make it impossible to leave the key in the car ignition.

The deadline for submitting comments is June 2, 1976. Send suggestions to Docket Section, Room 5108, NHTSA, Washington, DC 20590.

REPORT WATER POLLUTION HERE

What to do if you spot an oil spill on a nearby waterway? Report it immediately by telephoning this number: 800-424-8802.

That is the toll-free hotline established by the U.S. Coast Guard to receive reports of oil spills and chemical spills in lakes, rivers, and other waterways.

The hotline connects callers with the Coast Guard's National Response Center (NRC) which was created to provide a central location for gathering data on discharges of oil and hazardous substances into the Nation's navigable waters. NRC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is staffed by Coast Guard Officers who are members of the Marine Environmental Protection Division.

For more information about the Coast Guard's campaign to eliminate water pollution, consumers may contact the nearest Coast Guard office, listed in local telephone directories under "United States Government."

DOT Receives Comments on Consumer Plan

(Continued from page 1)

consumer protection agency; 5 expressed support for DOT's proposed plan; 5 supported more local meetings between consumers and agency officials; 4 recommended that cost/benefit information be included in agency rulemaking or legislative proposals; 4 commented on advisory committee membership criteria and procedures; 3 urged that details of implementation and followup be included in the plan; 3 recommended expanding the plan's definition of "consumer"; 3 suggested governmental financial support for consumer groups; 2 recommended improving guidelines for local citizen participation in transportation planning; 2 cited the need to weigh consumer interests as but one of many legitimate interests in governmental decisionmaking; 2 concerned costs resulting from increased consumer representation; 1 cited the need to improve complaint handling and followup; 1 stated that any consumer representation plan "should make consumers feel that their time and effort are truly valuable." In addition, there were 9 requests for inclusion on various DOT mail lists.

These suggestions are now being studied and considered in the course of DOT's effort to revise the plan. Purpose of the revision is to determine how various provisions may be strengthened in order to broaden consumer involvement in DOT's rulemaking and decisionmaking processes.

In the proposed plan, DOT's intentions concerning consumer involvement are spelled out in a series of "Initiatives" contained in the document's final section.

Since publication of the proposed plan, one initiative had already been implemented. As a result, each operating administration in DOT now has at least one staff member designated by the administrator to carry the responsibility for representing the consumer's interest (See *page 2*).

The administrations' consumer affairs officers have been meeting regularly with Ann Uccello, Director of DOT's Office of Consumer Affairs, to discuss ways to strengthen DOT consumer programs. For a list of all consumer officers' phone numbers and addresses, write to Office of Consumer Affairs, Department of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590.

DON'T FORGET: CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS!

The regularly scheduled date for switching to Daylight Saving Time will occur on Sunday, April 25—unless Congress passes legislation calling for an earlier date. As *Transportation Topics* goes to press, no such legislation is in sight.

New Railroad Law to Upgrade Service

(Continued from page 1)

the urgent problems of the country's rail industry.

As analyzed by FRA, key features in the law are the following provisions:

- Seven bankrupt Northeast and Midwest railroads are reorganized into the Consolidated Rail Corporation (ConRail), a freight railroad in which the Federal Government is authorized to invest. The law provides $2.1 billion for the start-up of ConRail.
- The Department of Transportation will upgrade rail passenger service in the Northeast Corridor. The five-year program will cost $1.75 billion and will include improvements in tracks, stations, bridges, tunnels, signalling, and traffic control. In addition, there will be an expanded program of converting from diesel engines to electric engines; this will reduce pollution and save energy.
- Reforms are mandated for various Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) regulatory procedures including setting of freight rates and reviewing of proposals for mergers and consolidations of rail services. In addition, ICC hearing procedures will be streamlined, and an Office of Rail Public Counsel will be established to represent the public interest in ICC rail proceedings.
- A program is established for financing railroad rehabilitation and improvement. A fund of $1.6 billion is provided, to be administered by the Secretary of Transportation.
- A two-year program of subsidies is provided for bankrupt freight and commuter branch lines in the Northeast and Midwest. Without this subsidy program, these bankrupt lines could be discontinued because the new legislation has not made them part of ConRail. This provision offers 100 percent Federal financing for the first year of the subsidy and 90 percent for the second year.
- Another Federal program of assistance to branch lines is also established by the law, for a five-year period. This funding will be available to all States for the purchase or acquisition of bankrupt lines. This provision offers financing ranging from 100 percent for the first year to 70 percent for the fourth and fifth years.

A fact sheet presenting full details on all provisions of the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976 is available from Office of Public Affairs, Federal Railroad Administration, Washington, DC 20590.

LOOKING FOR NOTICES ON FAA RULES?

If you have a continuing interest in the rulemaking activities of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), you should be aware of FAA's procedure for publicizing its Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs).

After publishing an NPRM in the *Federal Register*, FAA mails free copies to all persons on the particular mailing list pertinent to that NPRM's subject matter. FAA maintains more than 60 mailing lists, covering a broad range of topics such as "Pilot Schools," "Special Use Airspace," and "Federal Aid to Airports."

For a complete list of the mailing list titles, write to DOT, Publications Section TAD-443.1, Washington, DC 20590; ask for Advisory Circular 11–2. The circular also describes how to place your name on any of the NPRM mailing lists.

If you wish a single copy of any specific NPRM, you may write to FAA, Office of Information Services, Public Information Center, AIS–230, Washington, DC 20591. Identify the NPRM by citing docket and notice numbers, as well as title and date when published in the *Federal Register*.

FAA ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR INVOLVING CONSUMERS IN AIRPORT PLANNING

DOT's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued new guidelines for airport sponsors and planners, designed to provide increased opportunity for consumers to become involved in airport planning.

Published as an Advisory Circular entitled "Citizen Participation in Airport Planning," the guidelines present various approaches for airport planners to follow in order to enhance citizen participation. These range from a basic program for smaller projects to a broad comprehensive program which includes citizen advisory planning groups, consumer workshops, and news media information campaigns.

The guidelines emphasize that by involving citizens in the early stages of the planning process, officials can more easily identify potentially controversial issues, such as site selection for a new airport or major expansion of an existing airport. FAA stresses that sound airport planning requires public involvement, to be certain that the plans are compatible with community needs and desires.

Free copies of the guidelines may be obtained by writing to DOT, Publications Section, TAD-443.1, Washington, DC 20590; request Advisory Circular #150/5050-4.

NEW PUBLICATIONS FROM DOT

For your information, *Transportation Topics* presents this list of selected consumer-related publications, reports, and other materials recently published by DOT.

Tips on Car Care for Deaf Drivers (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)—Explains how the deaf or hard-of-hearing driver can detect existing or potential automotive problems through use of senses other than hearing. For free copy, write to NHTSA, DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

Automotive Rust—Its Cause and Prevention (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)—Consumer fact sheet. For free copy, write to NHTSA, DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

Safety Tips on Use of Headlights (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)—Consumer fact sheet. For free copy, write to NHTSA, DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

The National 55 MPH Speed Limit (Department of Transportation)—Fact sheet describing background of the 55 mph law with statistics on the reduction of traffic fatalities and savings of fuel and dollars for five classes of automobiles. For free copy, write to Office of Public Affairs (S-80), DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

Getting Involved in Transportation (Office of Environment, Safety, and Consumer Affairs)—Booklet designed to tell interested citizens how they can participate in the transportation planning process and in the environmental impact assessment process. Focuses on planning for highway facilities. For free copy, write to Office of Consumer Affairs, DOT, Washington, 20590.

"No-Fault" Automobile Insurance (Office of Consumer Affairs)—Revised edition of popular consumer fact sheet. For free copy, write to Office of Consumer Affairs, DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

Air Traffic Control (Federal Aviation Administration)—Booklet that describes, in layman's language, FAA's Air Traffic Control system. Includes description of and qualifications for the job of air traffic controller. For free copy, write to FAA Information Center, APA-230, Washington, DC 20591.

First Aid for the Boatman (U.S. Coast Guard)—For free copy, write to Coast Guard (GBA-2), DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

Safety Standards for Backyard Boat Builders (U.S. Coast Guard)—For free copy, write to Coast Guard (GBA-2), DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

A Pocket Guide for Visual Distress Signals (U.S. Coast Guard)—For free copy, write to Coast Guard (GBA-2), DOT, Washington, DC 20590.

The Secretary of Transportation has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this Department. Use of funds for printing this periodical has been approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through August 30, 1977.

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